

Fall 1977

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carroll quarterly

fall 1977



*The Wintering*

*My gentler season*

*is gone,*

*and the tree that blossomed there  
has withered,*

*and is gone, too.*

*No longer the sea-wall*

*which kept back the frosted waves.*

*Only the pounding of the surf*

*on an empty and unprotected shore.*

Kathy Kavanaugh



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cover

*Sylvia Gale*

The Wintering

*Kathy Kavanaugh*

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*Jodie Nolan*

## That Time of Year

No wonder we dream witches flying,  
fire and blood leaves falling,  
wild nights coming at us  
and that nagging moon up there.  
Silly to long, shivering, for green days  
that only tease us with warmth  
and then, like children, run off  
towards another autumnal mystery.

Once the smell of burnt leaves  
in the yellowing air  
marked time like a festival  
and released a friskiness  
bred of bone-clean branches,  
frosted ground, boy games  
and the bark of a distant dog.  
Gangs of winds at supper time  
fired my eyes and skin  
with a keenness--also fixed  
in dancers of the tarantella.

Inside the whitening flesh  
when limbs dry and senses fag,  
the soul keeps running disappointed  
they cannot pace together any more,  
but, cooled again and again  
by mocking Halloween moons,  
learns to adjust to body time, admit  
that branches must carry on the business  
begun a spring ago.

*Francis J. Smith*



## In a Cold Season

Hibernating these long youthful years,  
I have never touched such naked cold  
as I now see in weathered faces  
of this season's prisoners.

All the world had once been  
the ordered universe of paternal strength  
and the fluid comfort of the womb;  
so all my pains were mere feints  
and sorties into circumstance.

But now the winter is unavoidable  
and all the feather comfort fled;  
I heard the omens in the distant cries  
of birds who left me gaping at their flight.

There now are no more creatures of the sky,  
only land-bound beasts with greedy beaks,  
pursuing unclean scraps and frozen crusts.

With branches like white, naked bones,  
deserted trees stand skeletal against the sky,  
revealing birds' abandoned nests that look  
like ancient skulls suspended in the air.

*Vincent Casaregola*

For Robert Lowell

I have always been with you  
in your net of dreams;  
the enormous sorrow and attrition  
somehow breaking into light  
in words upon the page.  
Now we ride, as light dives  
into dark  
amidst towers  
of your appointed city  
where Liz  
waits still,  
her eyes the aperture  
for the enclosure of her being.  
Past Hooker's statue  
and the West St. jail,  
Madaket and the aspiration  
and demise  
of all on cosmic Pequod  
borne with you,  
your apotheosis, also, in your ocean perishing;  
one, now, with Warren Winslow,  
Delmore, John and Randall  
--brothers of resonance  
and nettled glory:  
marginal, now, in the world's memory

but becoming deeper  
and more relevant  
as pages are turned  
in lonely absolute rooms.

The bottle is still half empty  
and the enormous censer,  
ashtray of your anxieties,  
signals the beginning  
of your obsequies,  
and I would bend,  
burning surrogate comforter,  
as Sexton to John Holmes,  
to bring you, at last,  
beyond the turn of the river  
and all erupting surf  
to sleep  
that has always longed to wake  
beneath the turmoil of our dreams.

*James Magner*

Bridled

Little horse stands patient  
flicking petty flies and  
waiting to be licking  
her groom's grainy fingers.

He comes, patting flatter  
strapping leather bands  
binding both to race or plod.

Veil-mane toss, muzzle flares,  
she accepts the metal  
he slips atop her tongue.

Familiar bit permits  
delight in slender grass  
that rubs her flanks, beyond  
the mud corral's constraint.

*Sheila Haney*



J. TACCHINA

## Song

Why should I gaze candidly  
at you who bodily dare  
to image what poems declare,  
for you enlighten me,  
and so I stare.

You fill my eyes with the sweep  
of curve and steady line;  
so to my listening eye,  
your body teaches more than your mind;  
and even, as you toss your head,  
the gentle play of your russet hair  
enlightens me,  
and so I stare.

But do not think this to be  
a power yours alone,  
do not return a glance  
contemptuous of my own;  
no, you can never scorn or boast,  
although your beauty touches song,  
for the image you incarnate  
is but a slender ghost  
that takes your form and passes on,  
beyond your so diligent care,  
but it enlightens me,  
and so I stare.

*Vincent Casaregola*

Cycle Poem

We ride to ride  
                    and ride  
            asphalt galaxies;  
pump humped rimes in mock  
repugnance to machine and smoke;

our sun-shocked silhouettes mime  
archetypal birds of dance:

            bend of back,  
            arc of underthroat,  
            snap-tune of knee and joint,  
thrilled steel-skin music  
            single moving  
                    movement vision

by cycle, cycle bye  
buy cycle on cycle down

we roam and loom  
            cliffs, corners, hugging  
            curb and air  
in loop of lung and chain

we chant the repetition of our somehow crippled form  
odysseys of ever on,

fugitives in night,  
            of rain, stillness,  
cynics of up, of climb  
lovers of curve and  
            ac-  
            celera-  
                    tion

we deraille  
            sew-up  
            gyre and imp and bank,  
            handle, bar, and crank  
we curl continents in narrow paths of silent awe

in wake of crushed squirrels,  
                    gnarled birds,  
                    and man  
we poke bowed heads to distances  
to move our movement  
On.

*David M. LaGuardia*

ON THE FIRST WORD OF MOBY DICK:  
ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

BY  
PROF. S.O. TERIC  
ENGLISH FACULTY  
MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY  
AND TEFLON RESEARCH CENTER

The first word is an essential feature of every novel. On a fundamental level, this characteristic provides a link between all the various aspects of the novel tradition. Joyce or Dickens, Hemingway or Dostoevski, the basic structure is identical: one word at the beginning, followed by others. As though drawn by some irresistible psychic magnet, each novelist eventually adopts this form.

One of the most fascinating opening words in all literature is that which commences Herman Melville's Moby Dick. "Call"--what sweet inspiration!--the remainder of the sentence would seem virtually incomplete without it. One conjectures that Melville originally began the novel ".....me Ishmael." Intuitively realizing that this somehow lacked his usual verve and clarity of direction, Melville added that magic word "Call". The rest is history.

Why did the author choose "call"? Why not "name", or "label", or "denote"? Upon superficial examination, it might appear that different terms could have served Melville's purpose just as well. However, it is the contention of this piece that Melville chose "call" purposely, that "call" is imbued with a multitude of contextual and subliminal meanings which go unnoticed by the casual reader.

To begin, "call" is not merely a single word. Within its linguistic labyrinth are the formulations "all", "cal", "al", and "ca". By no means are these appearances coincidental. Each is designed to convey some element of philosophical or personal information.

"All"-- obviously, Melville was here referring to the homocosmicity of the universe. This "all" is a precursor of the allness which is a central theme of Moby Dick, the allness of ship, sea, and sky, of man and cetacean. Brilliantly, Melville in a single statement manages to convey the essential unity of existence.



Two of Melville's closest friends were Calvin Crumper and Allen Limpet. These men, by purchasing two copies of Moby Dick apiece, constituted the author's main source of income during the years 1851 to 1866. The "Cal" and the "Al" within "call" are Melville's tribute to these dear acquaintances. Since the two benefactors lived together in the same apartment and were lifelong companions, it was fitting of Melville to intertwine their names in his token of esteem for them.

Imagine, if you will, the sound an albatross makes as it circles a ship. Immediately, "Ca!" (pronounced "caw") rises to mind. Thus, the "Ca" within "call" symbolizes the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge upon Melville. As Coleridge's albatross flew in the air, so does Melville's whale swim in the sea. Melville appropriates Coleridge's idea of physical motion and transfigures it for his own use. Did "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" actually inspire Moby Dick? Is Moby Dick, in reality, a mutated rendition of the albatross? Albatrosses "swim" above the sea; whales, within it. The connection is too clear to be ignored.

The enigmatic prophet Snotradamus (1503-1548-1467) wrote these words nearly 500 years ago:

There wyll Bee a Calle;  
and it wyll be Whyte,  
or Blacke, or of some  
Othyr Hue; it shyll Bee  
of the Sea, or somewhyre  
Else; and of some Tymme,  
now or Thenne.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, this remarkable prognostication can refer only to Melville's "Call". Who was Snotradamus? Was he possibly an ancient astronaut, able to foresee the future by means incomprehensible to us even today? Was Melville perhaps of the same race, linked to Snotradamus by dint of common racial blood? Was Melville a traitor to his hidden people, determined to warn humanity of the presence of alien intruders? Perhaps Moby Dick is allegorical; perhaps the white whale is not a whale at all, or even an incarnation of man's tortured psyche. Perhaps Moby Dick represents an interstellar submarine, capable of both aquatic and air travel (remember the albatross?). Are we really the masters of Earth? Or is the pretended dwindling in the number of whales a mere ploy? Are massive fleets of alien vessels lying low on our ocean bottoms, grouping for the final attack? Is Melville attempting to "call" humanity's

<sup>1</sup>The Archbishop of Chancrebury, Ye Snotradamus  
Prophesie and Cooke-Booke, 1578 ed.

attention to vipers within its midst?

The letters that comprise "call" are themselves of interest, for they draw attention to the sensual and sexual nature of Melville's work. Anyone even remotely familiar with the works of Freud cannot help but notice the psycho-sexual symbolism. What is the letter "c" but the rounded belly of a pregnant woman? Appropriately enough, the repeated "l" serves as a doubly potent phallic motif. The fertility undersong is unmistakable. Almost the entire novel is set on the sea, which is the mother of all life, teeming with reproduction, growth, and quite possibly, interstellar submarines. And yes, what of the "a"? The English letter "a" strongly resembles the Phoenician symbol "blek", which roughly translated means "a horny toad or unclean butter knife".<sup>2</sup> This ambiguity in meaning mirrors the ambiguity of the novel as a whole. Whale or weapon? Creature or utensil? This uncertainty is the key to Moby Dick's richness. In the future, provided that the aliens are overcome, Melville's "Call" could prove to be a continuing treasure trove of literary insights.

(Next: Dostoevski's use of "The" in The Brothers Karamazov)

<sup>2</sup>I.N. Joyit, A Compilation of 1001 Potentially Dirty Ancient Words.



*Darrell Bilancini*

## Eighty Years Borne in the Dust

Eighty years borne in the dust:  
The sun rising sears the cotton row,  
Mosquitoes hum against the moon's pale.  
Omen of distant thunder, a hush  
    lurks in the pine barren;  
Across the fields comes the hollow dirge  
    of baying hounds.

Eighty years borne in the dust:  
Furious robed riders break through cane,  
In ghost loomings, jump stump and bayou.  
A yell, a curse, cross aflame...  
    now silence:  
The steady hoof-heart beat fades in the dusk.

Eighty years borne in the dust:  
Generations-blackened caldrons hiss  
    over wan-flaked coals.  
White-skinned hog, treed, hangs gore-throated,  
    lax, waxen.  
Blackboys on cracked blacktop, cartwheel,  
    jump in glee.  
A whoop, a shout, a grin for the knifeman.

Eighty years borne in the dust:  
Faulkner, since your Mississippi alluvial soil,  
Your native stamp, farmed patchwork of man,  
Dustfilled, lustful, bore you, beckoned you.  
Wilderness ravaged, bearless,  
    the silent water-moccasin rules.  
Hearts harrowed, black-white, passions  
    engraved on the land,  
Now you measure your dust, beneath the brambles,  
    beneath the granite.

Thin voiced, across the night,  
I hear the call.

*John Obrecht*

Old River Road

Down in the rumbling guts of the city  
We cruise along the narrow, broken road.

Down past the smoky stone palaces  
along the soiled, murky river  
rolls our dented green four-door,  
death-rattling and coughing  
like the men who have died here.

The clashing, sonorous impact  
of grinding machinery, steel against hot steel  
Drowns out the radio's scratched voice

And the mill furnace  
looks like a Baptist preacher's Hell,  
Replete with sweating, helmeted devils.

Somewhere a tug moans solemn greeting  
as we approach the grimy windows of the  
Flat Iron Cafe.

We can almost taste the whiskey now,  
going down like burning honey.

And though we are not our remembered fathers,  
We will try to be tonight,  
we who are lost from time  
children of dead men,  
and dying legends.

*Cecilia Kelly*

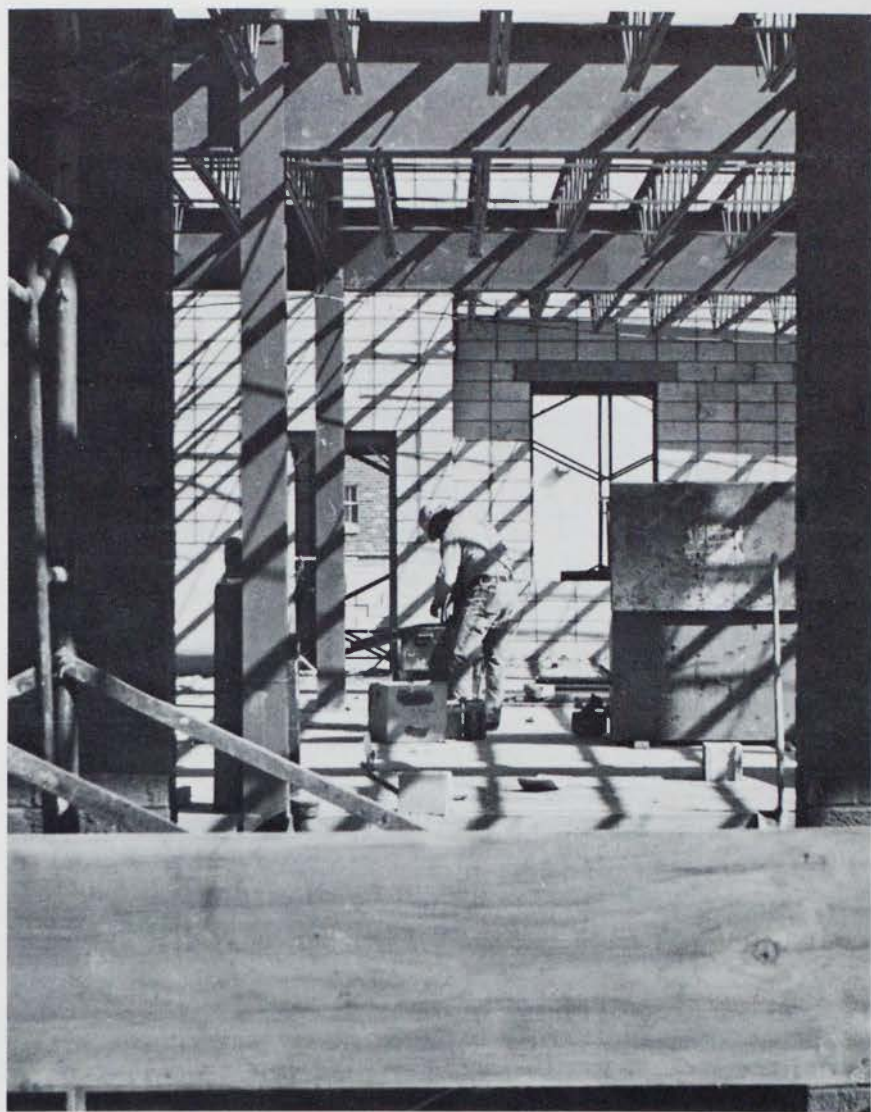
## Catacombed Youth

Catacombed,  
a Catskill eagle caught in the depths,  
wings severed,  
cawks silently,  
eyes glaring, burning, raging, sensing  
the breath of death too early, unearned.  
Cages of cold clammy rock and  
walls tying talons echo  
gasped hate and desire for sky.  
A youthful heart flutters and screams for the heights  
barely touched,  
never seen,  
never flown.  
Desperate rage unearthed  
echoes uselessly from wall to wall  
and creeps into the crevices,  
earthed again.

*Laurie Ewert*







*John Taormina*



Acquiline Straying  
(for demilia)

A galaxy had not  
prompted this spreading of wings;  
it was the expansive longings  
within the cosmic self  
that had set the feathers  
stroking in the wind  
with a sudden shove  
towards the lining of the sun.  
This journeying  
initiated by fantasy's mirages,  
pierced her in its brutal reality,  
spread a pain within her,  
hollowed out her innards  
until she felt bones  
pressing, not against  
supple flesh, but against  
a vacuum emptiness.  
Alone,  
frightened after  
acquiline straying,  
an ancestral land  
gave refuge.  
Denied the golden apples  
of the Hesperides,  
she pick-pocketed  
an Italia pride and spirit  
and her anaemic blood  
transfused by new courage  
darkened to passionate red.  
Those ruffled wings  
she pressed into curved folds  
and resumed flight  
unafraid.

*Marylin Mell*

## Ode to a Dying Flower

Old Lily,  
Wife of Bath in the apartment below  
bundles her one-hundred-ninety-pound-laugh  
into a bushel basket mouth  
and spills it in great lumps  
over the wet night.  
Like a safety catch on a loaded gun,  
we accept in comfort the laugh  
against the explosive power under it.

When her policeman husband  
holsters away to the day's beat,  
her bear-hug pinned all over his blue chest,  
she replaces him easily  
with a great Angora cat  
that asks much less  
than sleeping with her at night,  
pluming folds of age, plumply dying.

Strangers cannot reconcile  
loving old Lily in the dark  
or anytime,  
but the cat and the policeman  
keep coming back  
to the gap-toothed glee of her laugh,  
and the portion of this festering flower  
that is theirs.

*David M. LaGuardia*



*Mary Ann Nook*

To Nicholas Predovich, S.J.

I live in Philadelphia now,  
with a woman of the sky.  
Streets are full and green with Spring,  
cats hiss beneath my windows.  
In the park across the courts  
wildflowers rise among long grass,  
dance their first week of bloom.

A last night train clicks to a halt,  
she retires to pray  
silently to her body and the universe.  
I slip outside and go to that park--  
in silence and loneliness it belongs to me.  
I sit on a broken wood bench  
far below wind and bright white shine of moon  
and pray to a God made closest to me  
years ago in a narrow room  
with barren bed, a mirror,  
and aging Jesuit.

"Know thyself" echoed  
to Plato from the walls,  
"Strip," you said, dying Jesuit,  
"face yourself in the mirror."  
I understand you now:  
harlequin baboon face laugh,  
or stream of bitter salt--  
only the soul sees to spirit,  
only spirit can sanctify  
the awful ravage of the years.

You have done your work well,  
my father,  
Judean.

Sleep long.

*Jas Obrecht*

WHO ARE WE? WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

BY  
JIM REHO

One last delivery to make. Greg Tryson stumbled out of his car and plodded through the knee-deep snow, muttering profanely about the injustice of college students having to work on Christmas Eve. This last stop, though, might prove profitable--one set of porcelain figurines, to be dropped off at 1032 Fenton Place. Fenton Place was a highly fashionable apartment complex, and Greg knew that deliveries to such addresses often resulted in handsome tips.

The door was opened by a woman of a sort Greg did not like. She was impeccably wrought as the goods she had purchased. Not a piece of lint or stray hair disgraced her smile. Cruelly, Greg gloated at the fact that not even numerous layers of expensive make-up could hide the beginnings of crow's-feet around her eyes. She was waging a foredoomed battle against time. The physical beauty of human figurines, unlike that of porcelain, perishes eventually despite the most scrupulous of care.

Mustering a cheerful tone, Greg said, "Hi! I'm from the Brandyweiss Gift Shop, and I have the items you ordered."

"It's about time they came. Don't you people realize that tomorrow is Christmas? I doubt if you'll ever see another cent of my money," she snapped.

Greg's temper flared. "Listen, lady. You ordered that set well beyond our Christmas deadline. What do you expect, miracles? We did the best we could. You're lucky to have this stuff at all."

As abruptly as she had cut him, she tried to make amends. "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry I yelled at you that way. It's just that I've been a little touchy lately. Look, it's pretty cold out there in the hall. Would you like to come in for a minute while I get the money?"

Rather ashamed at his own outburst, Greg accepted. He also succumbed to the temptation of two chocolate doughnuts and a glass of warm cider she offered. For such a seemingly well-organized woman, she had a poor idea of her checkbook's location. As she rummaged through various drawers and cabinets, they exchanged casual bits of information. He told her he was a local college student earning a few dollars during vacation, and that his name was Greg. He learned that she was Mary Merchant, that her husband was out of town on an unavoidable business trip, and that her three children were visiting their grandparents and would be flying home tonight.

The phone rang and Mary picked it up. Her mother told her that the snowstorm had forced the closing of all airports in Mary's vicinity, and that the return flight was cancelled until tomorrow morning. The children would have to stay with her another night.

Noting the mildly disappointed expression on Mary's face, Greg asked if there was some problem.

"The kids can't make it in tonight. It looks as though I'll have to spend the night alone. Not much of a Christmas Eve, is it? Husband gone away, kids not here, nobody here but me. Nothing here but me."

Greg sympathized, but fortunately, he had no such worries. While Mrs. Rich Woman was doing whatever she did when she was by herself, he, Greg Tryson, would be at one monster of a party. He had been anticipating the big bash at Pete Johnson's house for weeks. Presents would be plentiful supplies of both liquor and girls. What more could a fellow ask?

Almost reluctantly, Mary found her checkbook and wrote the check. She gave Greg an even larger tip than he had hoped for. As he thanked her and rose to leave, he happened to look at her closely for a moment. She was Mrs. Mary Merchant, wife of a prosperous businessman, a woman who knew the right people and went to only the best places. But beneath the sophistication, the poise, the perfectly calculated and applied make-up, Mary Merchant was on this Christmas Eve a timid and fearful creature. She sat at the table unmoving, drained, and no amount of mascara could conceal the weariness and bleakness in her eyes.

Greg Tryson perceived this and could no longer dislike her. The porcelain doll had been replaced by a person. This woman was feeling down, all right--but that was not his affair. He had plenty of concerns of his own. He had a party coming up in only a few hours. It was too bad that she was depressed and everything, but he couldn't be expected to worry about it.



As he strode hurriedly toward the door, Greg caught a sweeping glance of Mary's luxuriously furnished living room. The carpeting was expensive, the furniture was expensive, every nook and cranny contained some valuable curio or antique. But amidst all this splendor two objects stood out. One was the Christmas tree. This tree far outshone any mere fir or pine. No dull green uniformity here--the plastic needles were colored in every imaginable hue. Built-in hooks were welded to the branches, ideal for the hanging of power cords. The tree was bedecked with row upon row of the best glittering ornaments money could buy, and at the top a star spun on an electric turntable, neon script blinking, "PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN."

The other item was far less conspicuous: a small bottle of valium tablets lying on an end table, the lid set down beside it.

Gregory Tryson noticed these things and could not leave. She had mentioned that she was afraid to drive in snow. Greg saw the snow piling on the shrubs outside in heavy blankets, fiercely swirling, and he knew that if he left, she would remain alone on this Christmas Eve. Clumsily, awkwardly, he said, "...uh, Mrs. Merchant--Mary--you look a little out of it. If I...uh...stayed and talked a while, do you think that might help any?"

She stared at him disbelievingly. She began to assure him that she was quite fine, that he was not needed, that the proprieties of the situation necessitated....but what she said, quietly, was, "Yes. It might. It's been a while since I really talked to anyone. Maybe that's a big part of the problem."

Initially, Mary was shy and hesitant. The incongruity of the situation, the thought of her confiding in a student almost young enough to be her son, unsettled her somewhat. Greg put her at ease by telling her about his struggles to keep his car running. When he explained about how he had virtually destroyed his engine attempting a tune-up, she smiled a genuine smile and visibly relaxed. As she began to talk about herself, Greg realized that the long-awaited party was soon to begin. Well, he'd just have to miss out this year. This was much more important.

As the hours passed their conversation grew deeper. Mary's reserve vanished like a dam gradually crumbling and being swept away in a flood of emotion, a basic need to talk to someone who would take the time to listen.

"And my husband, Greg, I think he only married me for my looks and my usefulness to him. But what can I do when the looks are gone? I'm not sure whether he really cares for me or not. Sometimes I feel like a pampered

animal, some kind of pet and nothing more. He doesn't have time to hear what I have to say, and isn't interested anyway. I feel so trapped, like this whole apartment is some kind of elaborate cage. If I don't keep up our social standing, he says I'm failing in my duties as his wife. My nerves are shot. I feel so empty. Thirty-five years old and what have I done? I used to think I could do creative things, but between the kids and our clubs and groups, I've never had any time. Even when people are around, I feel as if I'm by myself. I don't have any real friends-- plenty of acquaintances, but no one to trust or to care about me. What can I do? Do you know what I can do?"

On and on she rambled, disjointedly, pleadingly, and Greg listened as he had never listened to anyone before. What could she do? Break away, he suggested, or try to change her husband. Fight for an identity. But he knew that too many years of conditioning lay behind her, too many social pressures, too much of her energy already spent. She would not change. She would play out the string of her barren life until it broke, naturally or unnaturally. He could not help her. This was the frustration that ripped him up inside--that he simply could not help.

At last came the parting, softly and without display. A few tears rolled down her cheeks, leaving trails where the make-up washed off. He held her hand a moment, said good-bye, and was gone. As he walked through the blinding snow, head bowed, hands in pockets, he said a small prayer for her. He was not a religious man. If indeed there was a God, Greg himself wanted neither guidance or aid from Him. But it couldn't hurt to ask for someone else. It almost certainly would do no good, but it couldn't hurt. As he walked, Greg Tryson sensed that he was somehow changed, that he had gained a dimension of concern he had not possessed before. He thought about all the lonely people behind smiling masks in so many cold places. He thought about his society, a society that believed love was a by-product of gleaming teeth and immaculately coiffed hair.

"Who are we? Where are we going? Where have we been?" These questions ran in circles through his mind, and this night he began the search for answers. He wondered if there would be others who would talk to him as Mary had, and whether he would be able to help them. He did not know. He understood that he was only one man, generally impotent against the world's circumstance. But this he did know: he could try.



On Visiting a Russian Church in Poland

The morning outside is cold, dark, windy,  
and the shelter of the church takes double meaning  
to heavy-coated, simply dressed old women.  
The smoke-dulled eyes of near-forgotten saints  
gaze, meditating, from their own ages  
and old Russian heaven on socialist earth.  
Here they, as I, are aliens; else,  
we have no bonds, except our common Christ.  
The Lord's mercy is implored in the ancient tongue,  
once of men, perhaps now only of angels;  
the congregation kneels and crosses itself,  
the priest, behind the saints, goes on  
oblivious to any but God and tradition present.  
The walls are thick; they need not hear  
the noise of the bus station next door  
as the twentieth century rolls the roads,  
in willful mutual ignorance.

*Nike Tripha*

## epilogue

cleated boots like nails into coffinboard  
move across a curtain drawn stage empty,  
the intensity of some sinister light  
too much through the blackened image  
of a ragged understudy head lynched walking home;  
the eye of Winter glaring  
like Eckleburg through a blizzard of paper,  
questions wandering a mind maze, lost  
in the waste of costume changes and tired lines  
from a street theatre stilled in despair

O, tomorrow

*Dennis Archambault*



## Christmas Tapestry

Rising trails behold the set of the distant sun  
Fallen half behind the shadowed twilight horizon.  
While the man steers his ascent on the mountain  
Path, his horse sifts through the untried snow,  
Its chilled black hooves pace their climb.

Below them dwell families nestled in solid  
Homes. Red brick and white wood built this  
Chosen village that protects the valley's  
Serenity for the few who till soil and chop  
Wood might they feed their families and fireplace fires.

Years ago he came here and years from now  
Grown children will tell of his single departing. Winter  
Thick clouds enwreathed the morning star;  
To the moon they left an azure clear sky bejewelled with  
stars,  
While the durable travellers clamber on the summit, and  
halt at its steepest edge.

Oak church doors, strong but worn, closed behind  
The celebrating congregation hours before when they trod  
slowly homeward  
Stomping through the depths of recent snow,  
Saffron shaded by the evening light of ebony street lamps.  
Alone in the chapel glow the flickering candles.

Outside peaceful homes, surging winds crash through the  
Yards; snow is tossed in drifts at the base of still green  
trees  
Whose swinging branches give voice to the breezes  
And fly in thresholds opened to meet relatives and  
Guests, seeking to fill the sacred eve with dining and  
conversation.

Smoke painted bricks edge the fiery centered hearth that  
gives  
Comforting warmth to the room; joyous people gathered  
Do not notice the rattle of the windows or the cold  
Evening storm song of the forest. Rather, their vision  
settles  
On several color filled wall hangings and the holiday  
spruce in the corner.

Above the horseback observer clearly sees billowing  
chimneys;  
Light and laughter and the savory smells of supper feasts  
Decorating long linen covered tables are held within by  
the glass panes.

Nevertheless, he vividly perceives such festive delights  
of the  
Blessed inhabitants in the heavy-blanketed hollow.

Behind him the precipice trees fervently sway, the wind  
Cools his ears with its quiet whistled message. Swelling  
Fluid glasses his eyes, perhaps from the coldness or  
solitary thoughts;  
This special secret he vows never to reveal as he pats the  
Bright caparison of his dark companion and yanks sharply  
on its reins.

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